

André Kertész

Seven Decades

CHRONOLOGY

André Kertész Photographs: Seven Decades

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center
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1894

André Kertész is born July 2, the second of three sons, to Lipót and Ernesztin Kertész in Budapest, Hungary.

1909

Father dies, leaving Ernesztin to raise the boys. At family reunion Kertész sees collection of drawings, woodcuts, and other pictures dating from the previous century. Education includes instruction in the Hebrew language.

1912

Mother buys him his first camera, an Ica box camera which holds 12 small glass plate negatives, and begins taking pictures around Budapest. His brothers, Imre and Eugenio, are frequent subjects. Graduates from the Academy of Commerce and is employed as a clerk at the Budapest stock exchange.

1914

Drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army. The daily life of his fellow soldiers becomes a chief photographic subject. He collects postcards depicting war scenes and landscapes, which contribute to his visual education.

1915

Wounded by bullet, partially paralyzing left arm.

1916

Hospitalized in Esztergom to recover; has much free time to photograph.

1917

Photographs *Underwater Swimmer*. Publishes first photographs in *Érdekes Újság (Interesting Newspaper)*. Makes negatives during the war that are later destroyed during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

1919

After discharge, returns to Budapest, where he meets Erzsébet Salomon (later Elizabeth Saly) at the office where they both work. Photographs *The Dancing Faun*, with Eugenio (Jenő) Kertész as his model.

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1921

Meets and photographs many Hungarian artists. Takes leave of absence from his office job to live with an artist in the village of Abony, where he also learns beekeeping.

1922–25

Lives in Budapest, where he succeeds in having his pictures reproduced in the press. Erzsébet is his constant companion.

1925

Relocates to Paris from Budapest. Meets many other Hungarian artists, composers, journalists, and writers there, including Paul Arma, István Beöthy, Brassai, Noémi Ferenczy, Jozef Csáky, Gyula Zilzer, Lajos Tihanyi, and Marcel Vertès.

1926

Moves into apartment at 5, rue de Vanves in Montparnasse, where he lives until 1928. Visits Piet Mondrian's studio and commences what will become a series of photographs representing the studios of artist friends.

1927

Meets Herwarth Walden, director of the Der Sturm gallery, Berlin. Walden is friends with Jan Sliwinsky, director of the gallery Au Sacre du Printemps, where Kertész's first exhibition opens on March 12. The journal *L'Esprit nouveau*, founded with the collaboration of Le Corbusier in Paris, publishes work by Kertész.

1928

Purchases Leica camera and uses it to create *Meudon*. Marries Rózsi Klein, a fellow Hungarian living in the same apartment building. Receives copy of Albert Renger-Patzsch's book *Die Welt ist schön* from Anna-Marie Merkel. Work included in camera club exhibitions in Paris, Brussels, Ostende, and Prague.

1929

Represented in exhibitions *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, Essen, and *International Ausstellung von Film und Foto*, Stuttgart. Publication of first major article on his work in *L'Art vivant* by Jean Gallotti, "La Photographie Est-Elle un Art?"

1930

American debut of his work appears at New York Art Center in *An Exhibition of Foreign Advertising Photography*. Awarded silver medal for work in *Colonial Exposition*, Paris; group exhibition at Gewerbesmuseum, Basel. Pictures are bought for reproduction in numerous illustrated magazines in Europe.

1931

Separates from Rózsi Klein. Erzsébet Salamon (now Elizabeth Saly) visits Paris; she and Kertész reunite and move to rue du Contentin. Kertész exhibits with *Photographies d'Aujourd'hui*, Galerie d'Art Contemporain, Paris and Association Belge de Photographie, Brussels.

1932

Participates in *Exhibition of Modern Photography*, Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, and *Modern European Photography* at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York.

1933

Mother dies; Kertész returns to Hungary for the funeral. Marries Elizabeth. First book, *Enfants*, with 60 photographs and text by Jean Nohain, is published. Completes the Distortions, a series of some 200 pictures of nudes reflected in a parabolic mirror.

1934

Second book, *Paris Vu par André Kertész*, with introduction by novelist Pierre MacOrlan, is published. Distorted nudes exhibited at design showroom of Galerie Leleu.

1936

Nos amis les bêtes is published. First issue of *Life* appears, November 23. Advent of *Life* perhaps inspires Kertész's interest in New York, where he goes with Elizabeth and remains for the rest of his life. Contract with Keystone Press Agency, New York.

1937

First solo exhibition in New York, consisting of 60 photographs at PM gallery. Makes *Arm and Ventilator* and *The Lost Cloud*. Work published in *Coronet* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Five photographs are included in Beaumont Newhall's epochal *Photography, 1839–1937* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

1939

Commissioned by *Life* to prepare personal reportage on the New York maritime trades, but his work is not published. He meets Alfred Stieglitz and Frank Crowninshield, editor-in-chief of *Vanity Fair*. Creates *Melancholic Tulip*.

1941–1945

As a Hungarian citizen, Kertész is registered as an enemy alien by the United States government and is forbidden to photograph outdoors. For the next four years he photographs very little. In 1941 Elizabeth establishes a cosmetic firm in partnership with Frank Thomas (Ferenc Tamás). One photograph is included in the *Image of Freedom* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, which purchases *Armonk* for its collection. In 1945 the book *Day of Paris*, with text by George Davis, is published in New York. Begins regular work with *House and Garden* magazine.

1946

Exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, curated by Hugh Edwards, Kertész's first serious recognition since arriving in America.

1949

Signs exclusive contract with Condé Nast Publications to work under the direction of Alexander Lieberman at *House and Garden*. Between 1945 and 1962 more than 3,000 of his photographs are reproduced in its pages, thus precluding personal work.

1952

Moved to 2 Fifth Avenue, occupying a two-bedroom apartment overlooking Washington Square. Begins series of photographs of Washington Square.

1962

Is hospitalized for minor surgery. While recuperating, decides to resign from *House and Garden* in order to work independently.

1963

Travels to Paris for the first time since his emigration; recovers negatives saved for him during the war, including *Broken Plate, Paris*. Solo exhibition in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

1964

Exhibition of 51 photographs at Museum of Modern Art selected by John Szarkowski.

1966

Begins association with Igor Bakht, a skillful darkroom technician, who makes exhibition and reproduction prints from Kertész's negatives. Begins association with Grossman Publishers, Inc., which issues a small-format survey of selected work from 1912 to 1966 with text by Anna Fárová.

1968

Travels to Tokyo, where the exhibition *The Concerned Photographer*, organized by Cornell Capa and including approximately 30 Kertész photographs, is installed.

1970

Included in the *Photo Eye of the Twenties* exhibition, selected by Beaumont Newhall and installed at the George Eastman House, Rochester, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

1971

Begins association with Nicolas Ducrot, who edits a series of small monographs reminiscent of Kertész's Paris monographs, commencing with *On Reading* and eventually including *Washington Square* (1975), *Distortions* (1976) *Of New York* (1976) and *Americana, Birds, Portraits, Landscapes* (all 1979).

1972

Grossman publishes *André Kertész: Sixty Years of Photography*, edited by Nicolas Ducrot, with 250 reproductions spanning the years 1911 to 1972.

1973

Awarded the Prix Nadar, a prize from the French government for the book *Sixty Years of Photography*.

1977

Elizabeth dies in New York.

1973–1985

Kertész continues to photograph, often returning to themes and strategies established 60 years before. Is honored by an international array of exhibitions usually consisting of prints made under his direction by Igor Bakht. Receives honorary degrees, medals, and ribbons from universities, professional organizations, and ministries of culture and education from several countries.

1985

Kertész dies in New York on September 28, just before the opening in New York of the exhibition, *André Kertész: Of Paris and New York*. Organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, selected by David Travis, Weston Naef, and Sandra Phillips, it is the first museum survey of Kertész's art consisting solely of prints made contemporaneously with the negatives. Out of respect for the strong influence of France on his creative life, he bequeaths negatives and correspondence to the French Ministry of Culture.